

A

PLAN OF POLICE:

EXHIBITING THE

CAUSES of the present Increase of the
POOR,

AND PROPOSING

Economical and
A MODE for their future more effectual
Relief and Support. *^*

✓ Soc 2115.77.20

*

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

MINOT FUND

Nov 2, 1927

THE HISTORY OF THE
TOWN OF BOSTON
FROM 1630 TO 1880
BY
JOHN R. HARRIS
VOLUME I
PUBLISHED BY THE
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
1927

Thomas Gilbert

A

PLAN OF POLICE,
©c. ©c. ©c.

THE Expences attending the Poor in *England and Wales*, when the Return was made to Parliament in the Year 1777, amounted to about 1,556,000*l.* besides the Money raised in many Parishes which made no Returns; and from the best Observations and Calculations which can be made of the Increase of the Poor's Rate, in different Parts of the Kingdom since that Time, it is apprehended the present Amount must be near Two Millions and a Half.

*The real Causes of the Increase of the Poor
seem to spring,*

FIRST, From the great Number of Ale-houses, which gives them so many Opportunities

nities of wasting their Time, dissipating their Substance, and destroying their Morals.

SECONDLY, From the Imprisonment for Small Debts; as the Wife and Family, by that means losing their Support, have no other Resource but to the Parish.

THIRDLY, The Want of due Attention to young Children of the Poor, whose Parents are dissolute and abandoned.

To these may be added, the great Number of petty Thieves, Vagrants, and Beggars, which are permitted to infest our Streets and Highways.

As preliminary Measures for remedying these Evils, the following Propositions are suggested:

1st, A Reduction in the Number of Alehouses, suffering none to be licensed in the Country, but such as are really necessary for the Accommodation of Travellers, and restraining those in Cities and Towns within some proper Bounds.

[To facilitate such a Reduction, and relieve the Magistrates from the Difficulties they may lie under upon that Occasion, it is proposed that all those who have paid Duty for less than a certain given Number of Barrels of Ale within the last Year, shall be struck off, and an Increase of Stamps upon Licences laid on those which remain, sufficient to compensate the Revenue for the Reduction of the others.

That

That after such Reduction, the Justices should enquire into the Behaviour of those who had sold greater Quantities, and strike off such as shall appear to have been blameable in their Conduct, and add the like Number from the most reputable of those who shall have been struck off.]

2dly, A Reform in the Laws which permit Imprisonment for Small Debts, by limiting it to 10 $\frac{1}{2}$. or upwards, without adding the Costs of former Suits.

3dly, The inflicting Penalties on the Inhabitants of the Places where Felons, Thieves, and Beggars shall be harboured, at the Time they commit the Offences for which they shall be convicted.

And 4thly, The using proper Means for educating and employing the Infant Poor.

The Mode of Application of the Poor's Rates now in use, is liable to such a Variety of Frauds and Abuses, that there seems but little Prospect of regulating or correcting it *effectually* under the present System of Poor Laws.

Various Plans have at different Times been suggested and recommended, all of which, on being considered with Attention, have been found either impracticable or inadequate. From these circumstances, and an earnest Desire to promote an Object of so much Importance, the following Plan is produced, which it is

hoped, if approved, may be made effectual for the Purpose intended:

1. That the Administration should, in some measure, be taken out of the Hands of the Churchwardens and Overseers, by interposing the Assistance of other Persons, under the Power and Authority of certain Committees herein after described.

2. That the Money necessary to be raised for the Relief and Employment of the Poor, should arise from a County not a Parochial Aid, consisting of a Contribution from each Parish and Place, of the Sums which have been raised therein for the Use of the Poor, on a Medium of the last three Years; these Sums to form a General Fund for each County, from which the Poor shall be relieved, which will be the Means of putting an End to most of the Contests about Settlements and Removals.

3. And in order to ease Parishes, which may at first, from particular Circumstances, be heavy burdened, it is proposed that a Medium shall be drawn, in like Manner, at the End of every three Years, which will excite Oeconomy in those within every Parish who have the Execution of this Plan, that they may be relieved in their future Contributions.

4. It is also proposed, that for the Convenience of this Plan, and the Establishment of proper Committees, every County shall be divided into

into convenient Districts, comprehending a proper Number of contiguous Parishes, with a View to circumscribe the Limits in which each distinct Committee shall act.

[*The Commissioners for fixing the Dis-* Commis-
sioners for
fixing the
Districts.
tricts should be elected by Ballot, by Gentlemen of a given Description of Property, supposing 200*l. per Annum*, and consist of a proper Number of Gentlemen well qualified for the Business, living in different Parts of the County, according to the Extent of it; which Number should be specified in the Act. They should meet as soon as convenient, and procure the Names of the several Parishes, and also of the Townships, which maintain their Poor separately from the Parish at large; with a Description of their Situation and Contiguity.

To facilitate this, every Overseer of the Poor should be directed to send the Names and Descriptions of each to the Clerk of the Peace, to be laid before the Commissioners.

As soon as they have got the necessary local Information, they may form the Districts, by uniting so many Parishes and Places as shall appear most convenient; probably from Five to Ten Parishes, according to their Extent and Situation, having regard to the Business which the Act will require to be transacted by each Committee: That will induce them to take into each District a convenient central Town or Place, for the Residence of the Agent, and the Meeting of the Committee;

and also to insert within each District, such Places as are likely to produce Persons properly qualified for Committee Men.

When the Commissioners have had the District under their Consideration, and formed the Limits and Extent of it, they will probably be the fittest Persons to fix the Number of the Committee-men for each, and also the Salary for the Agent, under such Restrictions as may be thought fit to be made by the Act.]

5. The present Division of Parishes and Townships to be adhered to, with regard to the laying and collecting the Rates, and the keeping an Account of the Money expended within every such Parish or Place.

District
Committee.

6. That there shall be *District Committees*, consisting of a certain Number of Persons of a given Description of Landed or Personal Property, to be annually chosen by Ballot by Persons rated at *per Annum* to the Poor's Rate.

7. That the Number of Committee-men in each District shall be fixed by the Commissioners who are to set out the Districts.

8. That the Qualification for a District Committee-man shall be, the having an Estate in Fee of *per Annum*, of Personal Property of clear of Debts and Incumbrances, or the renting Lands of *per Annum*.

[The District Committee to meet the first Monday in every Month, at some convenient

venient Place near the Centre of the District, and at other Times occasionally, when necessary, either on Adjournment, or Notice of special Business from the District Agent.

To appoint Governors of Workhouses.

To hear Complaints from Paupers, after they have been before the Committee Agent.

To appoint, at their First Meeting, such Person as described in the Plan, to be their District Agent.

To fix a convenient House for the Reception and Accommodation of the Aged, Infirm, and Impotent Poor.

Also for young Children whilst of tender Years, till fit for Instructions, and proper to be removed to other Places under the Direction of the County Committee.

The Committee-men assigned for particular Parishes, to act with, and assist the District Agent as far as they can within their respective Parishes.]

9. That the District Committee shall at their First Meeting appoint a Chairman to preside at their Meeting, and One at least of their Members, to have the Care and Inspection of each Parish within the District which may be most convenient to such Member.

10. That it shall be the Duty of the District Committee to superintend the Government and Employment of the Poor, and particularly of the Infant Poor hereinafter described; and also to superintend the administering temporary and occasional Relief where necessary; and to see that proper Accommodations be provided for

for the Sick, Infirm, and Impotent Poor which may be proper to continue within the District.

District Agent.

II. That every District Committee shall, for their own Ease and Convenience, and the more regular and expeditious Dispatch of Business, chuse annually by Ballot, a Person of distinguished Character, Ability, and Integrity, who shall be called a *District Agent*.

[The District Agent to have his Residence in some convenient Place near the Centre of the District.

A House should be provided for him, and also a proper Room in it for the Use of the Committee when they meet.

To call upon the Overseers for their Returns of the Amount of their Poor's Rates within each of the last Three Years, to be delivered upon Oath to the District Committee at their First Meeting.

To receive Complaints from Paupers who want Relief, and order it as he shall see occasion (with the Concurrence of the Committee-man assigned for that Parish, if present), after inquiring into the Circumstances of the Case, and making a Minute of the Proceedings in a Book to be kept for that Purpose, which Book should always be produced to the Committee at their Meetings. Those Minutes should be so methodized as to have the Proceedings respecting each Parish entered distinctly.

To calculate, after he has received Orders from the County Committee, the *Quota* which

which each Parish and Place is to contribute to the County Fund for the next Quarter, and to attend the County Committees.]

That the District Agent shall devote his whole Time and Attention to the Business of the Committee, and shall receive a Salary for his Trouble, not exceeding in the Pound of the Amount of the Medium Poor's Rates within that District, to be ascertained as aforesaid; and that he shall keep a particular and distinct Account of the Money raised, and Expences annually incurred, in each Parish or Place within his District.

12. That the *Overseers* of each Parish or *Overseers* Place shall make Assessments, and collect quarterly the Sums which they shall be directed to raise by the District Committee; and shall return an Account thereof to the District Agent, and likewise to the County Treasurer, and pay the same to him, or such Person as he shall direct.

13. The Overseer to pay to the County Treasurer the Sum of £. on the Delivery of every Child, and of on the Delivery of every aged and infirm Person who shall be placed in Hospitals under the Care of the County Committee, in order to ascertain the Expences of each Parish with respect to their future Contribution.

14. And

14. And that they shall also pay the Expences to be incurred within their respective Parishes under the Control and Direction of the District Agent, and a Member of that District Committee, to whom the Inspection of such Parish or Place shall be appointed as aforesaid; and shall, at the End of every Quarter, transmit to the Treasurer of the County, and also to the Agent of the District, the Account of such Expenditure, signed and allowed by such Committee-man, and the Agent for such District.

[As the Duty of the Churchwardens and Overseers is now so much reduced by this Plan, it is apprehended the Churchwardens may be totally omitted; and in many Parishes where there are Two or more Overseers, it may be confined to One.

They are to attend the District Committee Meeting the First Monday in the Month; and also at any occasional Meetings, on Notice from the District Agent.

To send their Accounts to the District Agent, of Receipts and Payments, Two Days at least before each Committee Meeting, that he may have Time to examine them.

To deliver also an Estimate of the probable Expences of the succeeding Quarter.

To attend every Pauper who applies for Relief to the District Agent.

To pay all such Sums as shall be ordered by the District Committee or the District Agent.

To give no Relief without Orders, except on some sudden Emergency which does not admit of Time for Application to the District Agent, and in that Case to be afterwards allowed the Money so paid, if found reasonable.

There should be a Clause in the Act to make the Parish or Township liable for any Loss by the Insolvency of the Overseer.]

15. That there shall also be a *County* ^{County} *Committee*, ^{Committee,} consisting of a limited Number of Persons, having Freehold or Copyhold Estates of *per Annum*, to be annually chosen by Ballot by the Persons constituting the District Committees; and that the Number shall be One for every *per Annum* which the County shall pay to the Land Tax or Poor's Rate, as shall be thought most proper.

16. That the Duty of the County Committee shall be to make General Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Poor, and the several Officers and Persons entrusted with the Care and Management of them within each District:

[To appoint convenient Houses for the Reception of young Children, when of Age to receive Instruction, and capable of any Employment.

To appoint Governors for the Care of these Children, with suitable Allowances; but to employ any of the Poor Men and Women who may want Relief in that Service, if they are capable of it.

To

To receive the Accounts from each District Committee, also from the County Treasurer, Monthly; and examine them Quarterly, and allow them if approved.

To order the Number of Rates to be collected Quarterly, and certify such Orders to the District Agents, who are to proportion the Sums to be paid by each Parish and Place.

To meet at some convenient Place near the Centre of the County, in the Week next preceeding each Quarter Day, when each District Agent shall attend them.

To appoint a Treasurer at their first Meeting by Ballot, whose Duty is hereafter described; and fix a proper Salary for him not exceeding in the Pound, of the Amount of the County Rates, and to oblige him to give proper Security.

To make such other Rules and Regulations as they shall from Time to Time think fit, for carrying the Purposes of the Act into Execution, and conducting the Business of the several Officers.

To call upon each District Agent for the Returns of the Amount of the Poor's Rates within the District.

To receive Quarterly Returns from the several inferior Districts, of the Money collected and the Expences incurred therein respectively.

To examine and inspect the Accounts Quarterly.

To make Orders upon the County Treasurer for the issuing such Sums as shall be necessary to defray the Expences within each District, and to direct those Orders to the
District

District Agent, who should fix the Proportion which each Parish or Place is to contribute, and certify it to the Overseer of each Parish, &c.

To direct how the working Poor are to be employed; what Manufactures shall be carried on, and what Work-houses provided; and to superintend the Buildings; to furnish and lay in Stock and Materials to be employed therein; to set all Buildings by Contract; and to choose all necessary Officers by Ballot.]

It is not the Object of this Plan to have many Persons capable of Labour kept in Work-houses; it is rather wished to have them placed or hired out to such Employments as they are most capable of; and if they cannot earn their whole Subsistence, the Deficiency to be made up out of the County Fund.

There should be a Clause in the Act to punish any Man who goes away from his Parish, and leaves his Wife or Children chargeable there, unless he shall first obtain a Certificate from the Committee or District Agent, specifying their Permission and the Cause of his Departure.

The Justices of Peace are invested with full Power to procure Indemnities to the Parish, or to punish the reputed Fathers of Bastard Children.

The Expences in apprehending such Fathers, should be paid by them, if they are able; if not, out of the County Fund.

In order to inforce the Execution of this Plan, it may be necessary to compel those to act who shall be chosen Commissioners; and also those who shall be chosen upon the County or District Committee, by inflicting Penalties on those who neglect to attend their Duty, according to a Rota to be fixed at their General Meeting, to be paid into the County Fund. But a Clause should be inserted to excuse any Person from serving as a Committeeman who desired it, after he has served Two Years.

County
Treasurer.

[The Duty of the *County Treasurer* should be to attend the Committees.

To deliver his Accounts at those Meetings to the Committee, for Inspection and Examination.

To enter the Orders made by the County Committee, and to calculate the Quota of Contribution from each District.

To call upon the District Agent for the Returns made by the Overseers, of the Payments to the Poor's Rates within the last three Years.

To procure a Plan, describing every Parish in the County, with their Situation and Contiguity to each other; and also such Townships and Places as maintain their Poor separately from the Parishes at large.]

Besides the Money to be raised for the Benefit of the Poor in each County, by the Rates

Rates in the Manner herein before described, if his Majesty and the Legislature think fit to countenance this Plan, they may do it most essentially,

By giving the Fines, Forfeitures, and Penalties which may be incurred for certain Offences, to the Encouragement of this Fund.

They may also lay a Tax upon Dogs, to be applied in its Aid.

They may also grant, for the same Purpose, additional Tolls on Turnpikes, to be paid by Persons travelling on Sundays, where not already appropriated.

The charitable Donations, which have been or may be given for the Relief and Employment of poor Persons, may be proper to be inquired into, and would add a further Increase to this Fund.

And for another addition, and as an Inducement to the Inhabitants of Parishes and Places to enforce the Vagrant Laws, and to be watchful over the Persons who intrude themselves as Inmates or Lodgers, they may inflict the following Penalties, *viz.*

On every Parish or Place where any Person convicted of Burglary or Felony was harboured at the Time the Offence was committed, and was not apprehended and prosecuted at the Parish Expence,

For Felons without Benefit of Clergy, 10/.

Felons with Benefit of Clergy, 5/.

Also the Penalties of Half those Sums on the

B

Persons

Persons who harboured such Convicts in their Houses at the Time they committed the Felony;

And also a Penalty of Forty Shillings on every Parish or Place where any Person shall be found begging, and not taken into Custody and prosecuted as the Law directs, by the Officers of such Parish.

[Those Sums to be severally raised and paid by the Peace Officers of such respective Parishes or Places, out of *the Constable* or Headborough's Levies, on producing a Certificate from the Judge who convicted the Felon, or the Justice who inflicted the Penalty.]

And also various other Penalties and Forfeitures in certain other Cases, where they may be judged proper.

All which will operate both to correct Abuses and increase the Fund.

The Sums arising from the several Articles above mentioned, to be collected and received by such Persons as the County Committee shall appoint; and paid into the Hands of the County Treasurer, as an Addition to the general Fund for each County.

There are in different Parts of the Kingdom many *Clubs* or *Friendly Societies*, formed by a Number of Persons, who contribute small Weekly Sums, while in Health, to a Fund, out of which they are to be supported in Sickness and Old Age; which are very laudable
Institu-

Institutions, and merit every Encouragement that can be given them.

Sunday Schools, for the Instruction of Poor Children, have been introduced in some Parts of the Country with great Success, and seem to deserve the utmost Attention and Encouragement.

It seems expedient, therefore, that the County Committee should have Power to appropriate any Part of the last mentioned Sums for the Benefit of all or any of the said Friendly Societies, and also of the said Sunday Schools, to aid and promote their benevolent Purposes.

In the Application of the County Fund, peculiar Attention should be shewn to the Care, Education, and Employment of the poor young Children who may be proper to be sent thither, by improving their Morals, and habituating them to Labour as early as possible; and the sooner they can conveniently be taken from their Parents the better, that their Minds may not be corrupted by evil Habits and bad Example.

A convenient Number of Houses, for the Reception of these Poor Children, may be easily provided in each County, from Work-houses already built, or old deserted Mansions, without the Expence of new Buildings.

The like Means may be taken to provide comfortable Habitations for the Sick, Infirm, and Impotent Poor.

And when the Children attain a proper Age, they should be clothed and placed out as Servants or Apprentices, at the Expence of the County Fund.

Where there are not convenient Houses for the Reception of Ideots, Lunatics, and Persons disordered in their Minds, Two or Three neighbouring Counties may join, and out of these County Funds make every necessary Accommodation for those poor unfortunate Objects.

Where Districts have been already incorporated by Acts of Parliament for the Relief and Employment of their Poor, an Option may be given, either to adopt this Plan or to continue their own; and in that Case to exempt them from contributing to the County Funds.

In carrying these Purposes into Execution it may be necessary to make some particular Provisions and Variations respecting the Parishes within the Cities of London and Westminster, and Bills of Mortality, and other Cities and great Towns.

This Plan will effectually prevent all Removals from one Parish to another, in the same County. And as the Poor are to be maintained at a general County Expence (and all Counties are put into the same Situation), it may be proper to add a Clause in the Act to restrain the Removal of any Pauper to his Parish in any other County.

MR.

MR. GILBERT having been much importuned to bring forward some Plan for the Relief of the Poor, after considering the Subject in every Point of View, and trying all those Means which afforded any Prospect of Success, has formed the above Plan, which appears to him the most practicable, without exciting Jealousy, or raising popular Discontents. He is sorry he has not had Leisure to digest it more perfectly; but he was desirous of hastening it to the Press that it might receive an early Consideration.

He has studiously pursued throughout, the following great Objects, *viz.*

The making effectual Provision for the Poor, and the avoiding all Frauds and Impositions in the Application of the Money raised for their Relief and Support.

Though the Introduction of Salaries has been avoided as much as possible, in two Instances they seem to be essentially necessary, *viz.* to the County Treasurer and the District Agent. The Overseers will act, as they now do, without Pay: And it is hoped the Gentlemen of the Committees, when they have a proper Person of their own chusing to discharge the great Burthen of the Business, will cheerfully give their Attendance,

ance, and assist in so very important a Service, in which their own Interests are so particularly involved with those of their Neighbours and the Public.

Should this Plan be approved, great Care and Attention will be necessary in the Arrangement of it, and investing the necessary Powers in Hands the least likely to abuse them.

It may perhaps be thought proper to prepare the intended Bill ; and afterwards to print and circulate it during the Recess of Parliament.

It would greatly facilitate the Progress of this Plan, if a Preparatory Bill could be passed during the present Session, for the Purpose of procuring Returns from the several Parishes and Places, of the Expences attending their Poor during each of the last three Years ; from which the Medium for the Contribution is to be drawn :

And also for appointing Commissioners for forming the Districts :

And likewise for procuring Returns of the Charitable Donations for the Use of the Poor within each Parish :

As from those Returns, the two Houses of Parliament will receive very material Information to guide their Judgment upon the other most important Bill, when it comes before them the next Session.

When

When this Plan is properly settled and enforced, the Poor will have Peace and Quiet, and avoid the hardships they suffer at present whilst the Litigations about their Settlements are depending. The Magistrates, who are now forced to sacrifice a great Part of their Time to this Branch of the parochial Business, will be seldom interrupted with the Complaints of the Paupers, the Overseers who are often incompetent to judge what Sort of Relief to give them, will be freed from many disagreeable Importunities and Embarrassments, and the Rates be very considerably reduced.

There is nothing in this Plan calculated to serve any Party, or any individual Person.

There are no Powers intended to be given but such as shall be limited and secured from Abuse by every proper Check and Control.

One of the printed Copies will be sent to every Peer and Member of Parliament.

From the Magnitude of the Object, and the pressing Necessity for having some speedy Redress to so crying a Grievance; it is hoped there will be a general Concurrence in making an Experiment which appears very practicable, and promises so many Advantages to the Community, without the Hazard of any possible Danger or Inconvenience either to the Poor or to those who maintain them.

The

The Person who introduces this Plan, finding his Health will not permit him to take a laborious Part in the Business, is therefore obliged to call upon, and indeed to solicit the Exertion of the Zeal and superior Abilities of other Gentlemen to conduct and bring it to Perfection.

